the Marvel Tribune

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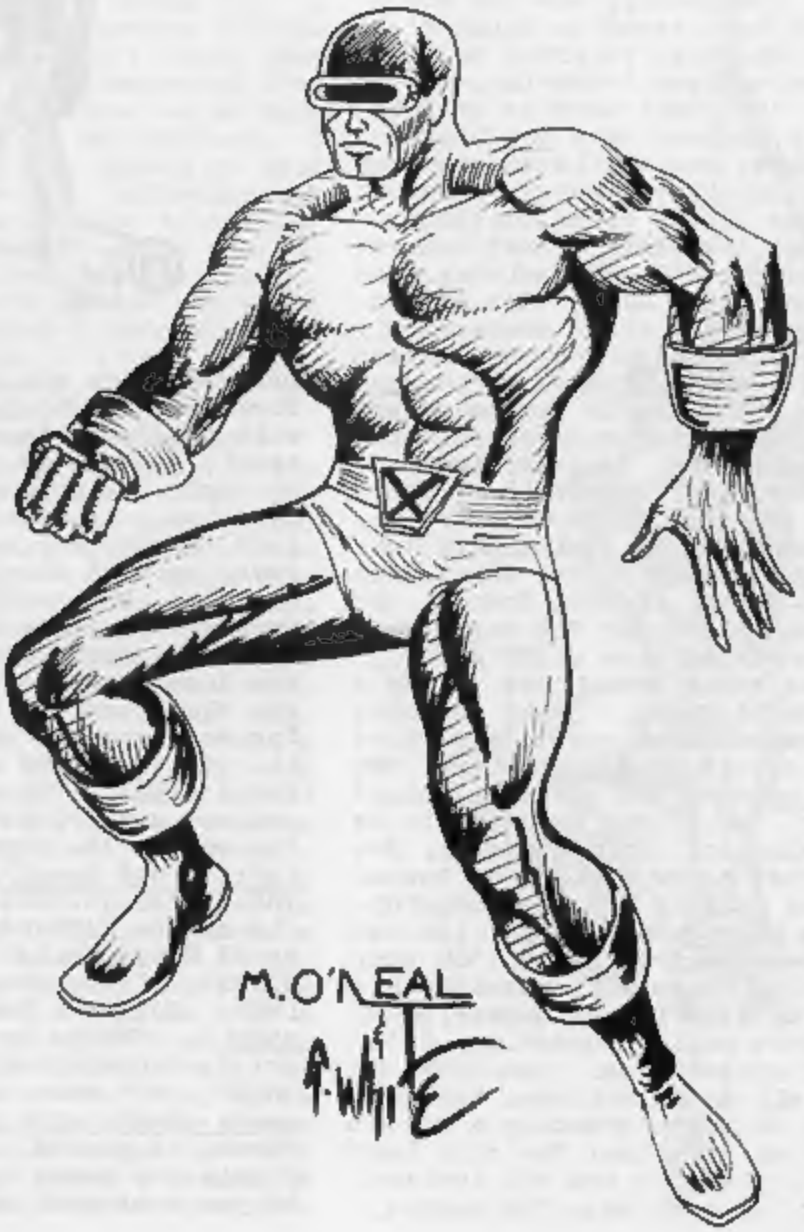


25¢ MEMBERS
30¢ NONMEMBERS

WHAT'S HAPPENING?

Welcome to NMA-TMT 1969! With the largest Marvel club outside of the MMMS (the NMA has 160 members!), we figure that this year will bring us even more success! Let's look AT

BY RON LIBERMAN

Here we are group, in our 10th issue, & they tell us we really are the finest!! Fanzine rater and NMA member John McGeehan gave us a 5 out of 5 in The Comi c Reader #71. Previously, are 7th and 8-th issues had been rated as being 4's!! But we must remember, in order to stay #1, we'll have to keep improving, & it's your support that will help us in doing that. Lately, members have not been doing their share; you are letting us down group. Send in all the money ya owe to us now, because if the trend continues--we may die, as the Yancy Street Gazette and Gang recently did. TMT salutes that great club, and only hopes that we continue to prove their great successors!!

In this issue, we feature several great improvements over #9. Issue no.10 is our second issue ever done in "columns", but issue #4 did not have straight columns, like this issue does. Another improvement is professional artwork!! J o h n Romita, the talented Spider-man artist, did some work which we will unveil this issue! We thank muchly, Ted White, who inked & semi-pencilled with Johnny! Oh yeah, pick up the latest EYE magazine--because it contains some stuff about... Marvel. This issue we welcome to TMT's Art Staff, David Tyson. David is young and inexperienced, but may very well de-velop into a very fine penciller! TMT needs articles now, (and art too, though not as badly), so do not hesitate in se-nding anything in. Unfortunately, I've discovered that there will be no Toronto Triple Fan Fair in '69, but hopefully, Stan Lee will come anyway. (He had reportedly been invited to the '69 con, and accepted). There will possibly b e a 1969 NMA fan meet in the summer, so if Toronto members would contact me, it'd be very much appreciated. Non-local NM Aers are by all means welcome, but it's not going to be worth spending a lot of money coming up here just for this small meet. Still, you guys are all invited! Print run of issue #9 was: 350 copies..

Bad news from the Comic Reader: Both... Nick Fury of Shield, and Doctor Strange will be discontinued very soon. This is mostly because of the advanced due date by their new printer, not because of a-ny sales. It seems that Don Sampson has left fandom, why we don't know. At any rate, we wish him luck in his future en-devours, and thank him for his long & hard work that he did for us. Scoop of the Year: Neal Adams may do an issue of the X-men! (This I gotta see!) To join the club, send us $1.50 which will pay for entrance fee and issues 7 through , 11. (Dues is 25¢ per issue, entrance , fee is 25¢). The amount of ## ******** you owe member, is printed in *25¢* the box to the right. Nothing ********* left to say but...read on! SEND DUES IN

THE MARVEL TRIBUNE is published quarter-ly by the NATIONAL MARVEL ASSOCIATION, at 63 FONTAINBLEAU DR., WILLOWDALE, ONT., CANADA. Issue #10, Feb.-Mar.-April of 1969. Editor - Ron Liberman (the Prez, still). TMT is dedicated to, and all , art is copyrighted by the MARVEL COMICS GROUP. TMT does not carry any ads, but ready sheets cost 1½¢* to distribute.

*each, of course!

NMAnia may never come out, write Sampson if you want your money refunded.

INTERVIEW: GARY FRIEDRICH

True to his words (see ish #7), Gary has completed the interview we requested. I guess there's not much more to say so we will begin right away.

Dear Ron, Okay, Ron...so here's the answers that I'm firing right back to you, six months late. I am sorry for the delay, and I won't offer much in the way of an excuse...except that I've been into a number of things since I wrote ya in May and just have not had time to do much of anything fandom-wise prior to this. So, again, my sincere apologies for this delay and here's hoping the following will be worth waiting for.

Oh, and I just wanted to voice that I very much enjoyed your interview with-9-Stan in the Marvel Tribune. I think that yours, more than any other interview I've read, managed to portray Stan as we know him at the office day in and day out. I wish that I could say the things he said about me weren't true but, unfortunately they are. At the time of the interview, I was somewhere between Missouri and California doing what Stan had not known--but, it was a fantastic summer out west, and excluding my wishing I hadn't caused Stan so many headaches, I'd jump at some chance to do it all again. However, you wanted an interview so...

TMT: What is your boyhood background?

GF: Strictly small town...Jackson, Missouri to be exact. I am the oldest of 4 children and grew up through good times, and bad--just about like all other, middle-class kids, I suppose. I guess that the most important thing during my adolescence was music. My parents raised me on a heavy diet of Glenn Miller-!-, Frank Sinatra, and Ella Fitzgerald! That eventually turned into my own personal digging for Elvis Presly, Chuck Berry and so on through the ab&c's of rock...right up to my present favorites, The Beatles and Country Joe and the Fish! I can remember from the time I bought my first record--"Don't Be Cruel" and "Hound Dog"!!! My happiest hours were when I could just go & shut myself up in my room and groove on the latest sounds...I mean, to me that was the ultimate experience...and it is still, although now, it's cool to have someone to groove with. Other than that, I worked my way through school (high) as popcorn boy and usher at the local movie theatre, and got into a lot of hot water for writing rebellious articles in their school newspaper. (One being a scandalous sports column in which I dared to berate the football team for a cry-baby murdering they took one unforgettable Friday, night. After high school, I took a try at college but just couldn't get with it at all. Since that seemed a drag, I tried marriage. But this didn't work out either, except for producing a son, Sean, who is now five and my absolute ! pride and joy. (I know that sounds corny, but just wait till you have one of your own)!! Following the divorce...I came to New York and got into comics.

TMT: When and how did you first become*

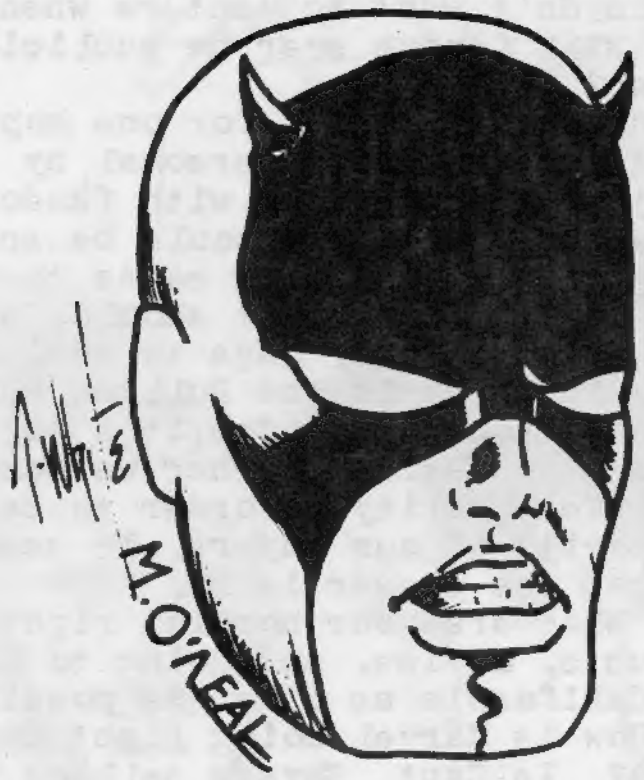
*continued

BY JOHN ROMITA AND TED WHITE

interested in comic writing?
GF: Well, I was just about to get into that. It really goes back to high sch. when I worked at this theatre with Roy Thomas. Although we did not get along, well at first (he chewed me out f o r something or other my first day on this job), we eventually became good friends through our mutual admiration for good, old Elvis. Then, I remember Roy running into the theatre one night, waving a copy of the Flash, and saying how great it was that one of his old, favourite , heroes was being published again. I had thought he was out of his tree at this time, but I have to confess that curio - sity compelled me to read it, and I got hooked too. For the next few years af - ter that, we bought a lot of DC stuff & liked it quite a bit. I even wrote an editorial on the merits of comics...and ran it in the school newspaper-- f o r which an old maid English teacher d e - manded that I be expelled...although I managed to beat the rap--and it was e - ventually printed in the Justice League letters' page by Julie Schwartz. Then, in '61, came the first issue of FF, and I was really wigged out by it. I could tell immediately that something new was happening and I definitely wanted to be

in on it. So, I proceeded to gobble up every Marvel mag in sight for the next couple of years. After that couple of years though, I suddenly lost interest in the comics. I guess it was about the same time that I went to work as a reporter for a local newspaper, and I think I must have decided there w e r e more worthwhile things to write about. At any rate...I more or less f o r g o t comics for two years and concentrated , on news writing--enough to become managing editor of the Jackson Pioneer..... which was a gas until this paper folded (it wasn't all my fault?). I went to New York after some encouragement by my buddy Roy, who by then had started working for Marvel.
TMT: How did you get started in comics, professionally, and how did Marvel acquire you?
GF: That's easy--with a few breaks it was, anyway. As I said, Roy talked me into coming to New York shortly after the paper folded. After about two months here, Dick Giordano, who was then editor of Charlton, asked Roy if he knew anyone who was interested in writing for them. Roy sent me to them, and I just started grinding out romance scripts. I didn't mind it all that much. As a matter of fact, I had a ball knocking out a few such classics as "Too Fat To Frug!" and "Tears In My Malted";but I was relieved when Dick gave me a shot at some superhero stuff...including the Sentinels... which I did with Sam Grainger, a helluva talented artist from North Carolina who is now inking for us (He'll be doing a Shield book in the near future over Herb Trimpe's pencils.), and of course, the Blue Beetle with Ditko. & after about a year at Charlton, there was an opening at Marvel which I was luckye- nough to fill, after doing a ten-page, trial western for Stan.
TMT: Not too many people know what Marvel writer does--that is, where is this work done, how is it done, and how long does each story take?
GF: That all depends. Since I now work free-lance...nearly all of my work i s done at home, wherever that may be at a given time. At the moment, I'm living in a hotel here in New York, and I work a wierd schedule. Since I hate the daytime, I don't usually get up until som e time after noon. Then, by ten or eleven at night, I am ready to get to work. I try to write five or ten page a night-- and it can take from two to four hours, depending on what kind of shape the old

brain is in. I have, and can, write an entire book in a single day, but I prefer to stretch it out over at least two or three days.
TMT:Does Stan edit your material greatly, or is the finished story almost exactly like the one you first write?
GF:They usually come out pretty much as written. From time to time, I'll d o something that Stan doesn't like, and I will have to rewrite it, but things u - sually go smoothly and very few changes are made.
TMT:Who is your favorite writer, and who is your favorite artist?
GF: I assume you mean comic writer, and my answer will have to be,over all, Stan Lee. I don't say that because he's my boss. That sort of thing isn't i n my bag. I simply feel that, on a story basis, Stan turns out better material more consistently than any other comic wri - ter. I would like to add, though,... that I think that Roy Thomas does bet - ter stuff from time to time, and I feel he has the potential to perhaps become a better writer than Stan. Denny O'Neil is a damned fine writer. It's a shame, we lost him; I haven't read much of the stuff he's done for National, but I do know he's capable of turning out excellent material. As for my favorite art - ist, theanswer can only be John Buscema ...I don't feel I have to explain that one!
TMT: Neither do we! Can you tell us a- nything about a new Marvel western mag coming out? Are there any others to a- pear? When will the Ghost Rider return ...?
GF: Your guess is as good as mine, Ron! We have a quarter western all lined up& ready to go, but switching printers has caused some delay in getting the comic- scheduled. It will contain all original material including a 10-page Ghost Ri - der story in which the secret of the Ta- rantula will finally be revealed. It'll hopefully be out by the summer,anyway!! Other than that, until we get this pri- nter change all smoothed out, we proba- bly will not be coming out with any new titles.
TMT: What has happened to the MMMS--has it been forgotten by Marvel?
GF:Not forgotten,just sort of shoved a- side. As you know, we have a very small office staff, & with all the new titles we've added in the past months, t h ere just has not been time to do anything-- with the MMMS. We're sorry about it, & we hope to be able to get something-CON. going with it again,soon. But I certain- ly wouldn't want to venture when.
TMT: Will fandom ever be publicized by Marvel?
GF:I doubt it, and I for one hope not.I don't mean anything personal by this... it's just that dealing with fandom takes up so much time that could be spent wo- rking on new mags,& it seems to me that fans would,or at least should, prefer to get new and better mags to seeing their names in print in the Bullpen Bulletins. I'm not knocking fandom;it's just that, we have to decide whether we want to... sacrifice quality in order to cater to a minority of our buyers. It seems to.. me that the answer is no.
TMT: What are your hobbies right now?
GF:Music, movies, and going to Missouri and California as often as possible.
TMT:How is Marvel doing right now,sales -wise? Is Capt. Savage selling well?
GF:Well enough. I'm not writing the co- mic now. We've given it to Arnold Drake. But the last several issues have sold-C.



quite well, and we don't have any plans to drop it. As for the rest of the line --things have never been better. That's about as far into the business e n d of things as I can go.

TMT: What can we fans expect in the future from Marvel?

GF:The same thing I feel you've been able to expect ever since FF#1, the best product on the market. I think Marvel has produced the finest line of comic's literature ever published--and I think, we'll continue to do just that. I can promised you Stan would not stand f o r anything less. Although we've grown, and Stan no longer writes all the mags, I believe I can guarantee he'll see to it that everything stands up to the excellent standards he set during Marvel ' s formulative years.

In closing, I'd like to thank you for the opportunity to sound off, and for being among our most loyal fans. We very much enjoy your zine and if I offende d you in any way, I didn't mean to. I just believe that men should be allowed t o say what they think, and that's what I've tried to do.

And I wouldn't have it any other way Gary. This way we know where you stand and thus, where we stand also. I want to take this chance to do a little well -earned appraisal. I have read most of the Sgt. Fury's that have been done, & I believe that Gary's stories in ish #62, and #63, were among the very best. Never has Fury been greater! These stories, prove without a doubt, the fantastic ability of Gary Friedrich, and we thank'm!

MARVEL MAGAZINES

Article written by Ron Liberman

In case you didn't know it, the sales of comics (in general) are declining immensily, for all brands but Marvel. Since Marvel's sales aren't that high right now anyway, I have reached the conclusion that unless some drastic change takes place in the format of a comic book, they are doomed to destruction.

We all know that comics are considered babyish by most people, and collectors are thought to be wierd But aren't all collectors considered a little unusual?! Isn't the toy soldier collector mocked?? Isn't a bottle-cap-collector laughed at? You bet they are. And then there's that mature guy, the stamp-collector. What do they get out of their collection? I once collected stamps but got sick of them; I can at least read a comic; you can't read a stamp! Yet, he is thought to be quite normal! Once you've seen a stamp you're after, that's that. Once you've found a comic you wanted, you read it--over again and again. As you see, the comic collector is the more practical collector, and he should be proud of his collection!

Now that we've straightened that item out, let us continue this essay.

Although comic collecting is a good idea, the comics themselves are n o t so good. In format they have not chang ed in over a decade, and in our modernized-world that is a sin. Marvel has fallen, behind the times and is too conservative. All comics have the same basic format... 32 (or 64) pages of newsprint paper and 4 more of cover material. This just is not enough. Comics are too small in length-- and profits made from them are pitiful-- the Comic Reader says that retailers now make profits ranging from 1¢ to 3¢ p e r comic. Now isn't that just laughable??? If I was a retailer (and I didn't collect comics), I'd refuse to carry comics, a s they just wouldn't make me enough money. If your neighbourhood store does not happen to sell comics, don't swear at i t s owner; he's an intelligent business man, and he knows that comics can't make hi m good money.

All this is fine you say, but where... does this leave us? I'll tell you; the comic format must be completely revised. As Marvel is obviously the leader in the field, what it does, will surely be fol-

lowed by the rest of comicdom, National included. Listen well as this may get complicated! Firstly, the name "comic" must be destroyed. Marvel "Comics" do not contain humour, neither do the DC. I see nothing funny about Cap's tor - ment over Bucky. I see no humor in the sad case of the Thing. If Webster doe s not even define the "comic" in his famed dictionary, the word just doesn'tE -xist, and that's all there is to it. We will now pretend we've dropped the name, but still, its format is with us---! We must invent therefore, the DC & M CG Magazines. Presto, they're here. Their cost? 25¢. Isn't that a bit expensive for monthly magazines? No, they'd ap - pear bi-monthly. They would be called, Graphic Stories (thanks to Bill Spicer and his Graphic Story Magazine) and be 64 pages long. They would be similar to the manner the Silver Surfer is presented. The entire magazine would be devoted to the star and no fillers, such as Marvel's Watcher, would be presented. The whole magazine would center around one or a few characters only. And ... each mag would have 40 pages of story& that's all. Marvel would print a grea - ter abundance of ads than they now do and would therefore make more money!!. Because of the 40-paged stories, con - tinued tales would be rare, but if they did occur, they'd be 80-paged giants!! As Stan told us in TMT #9, it's easier by far to plot a 40-paged story than 2 twenty-pagers. As the result, Stan Lee would have a slightly easier time, and plotting would improve. No longer will the 6 year old haunt Marvel. In mag. - format Marvels would be too expensive for the little tykes, & they'd attract more adult fans. Since not many shrimps would buy Marvel any more, the C o d e could be dropped and Marvel would retain almost all their readers. (Hopefully, enough adult readers would buy them that the little guy's money would not be mis -sed to too great an extent.) And Marvel wouldn't publish comics now, so the code would be powerless against them. Marvels would naturally be displayed with the ma -gazines and there their full potential, will be achieved.

Getting on to some other advantages, I would like to make a few suggestions. As I said, each mag would be 64 pages long, including 4 extra pages of cover, 40 being the graphic story. This doesn't mean that each mag would contain 24 pages involving ads, far from it. Three of them are reserved for an expanded letter section; if we get more story, we logically should get more letters. One full pag'd be used for bullpen news and Stan's Soap Box. Two-thirds of this page would fea - ture the news, the other third, Stan's S B. Another page would contain the Mag's checklist. Marvel's own ads would be li -mited to 1 page, as they are now. This means 6 extra pages for un-ad materials. Consequently Marvel would have 18 pages-worth of straight ad material, as com - pared to 11 pages it now has in its 25¢ mags. Therefore, greater profits for 1. Marvel, 2. the retailer. Since Marvel'd have only half as many mags, handling co -sts would be much lower. Each retailer, instead of getting 1 - 3¢ on a 12¢ mag-- at best a 25% profit--could get 3¢ - 8¢ profit on my scheme--a possible 33.3%pro -fit! Profits of this magnitude would lead comics out of this age of darkness, and into the light again. But even more important, it would put some <u>quality</u> in them. Oh yeah--annuals would be 35¢, in the Spidey Spectacular #2 form. Remember Stan, you're at your best in LONG yarns!

NMA Talk (8)

WHAT ARE THE MARVEL SPECIALS?

What's Happening To Marvel? First in a series.

-DON TYLER, 6736 S. DELAWARE CT., TULSA, OKLA., 74105

One year ago September, Ron sent me a copy of TMT #2, getting my name, probably, from an X-men letters page. It was called The Monthly Messenger then (lovingly shortened to the Monthly Mess), & had four pages plus cover. This was my first contact with the outside world of fandom. Since then, I have become a member of the NMA, and am still trying to get "known" in fandom (isn't everyone?). But I'm sure you didn't come all this way to see me get all sloppy sentimental.

In that issue however, was a column by Ron called "This Year's Annuals". It started me thinking (which is quite an accomplishment!) about just what makes up a Marvel annual, or, to humor Stan, a Marvel special?

Way back in 1963, the then - meagre population of Marvelites got a dou ble treat. The first was the second Strange Tales Annual, featuring great fantasy reprints like "I Am Robot", and others. But then Marvel did something unique in comics. Their second annual featured an original story featuring the Human Torch (then starring monthly in Strange Tales) and Spider-man.

The story, "On The Trail Of Spider-man", featured Spidey getting framed by a normal criminal called the Fox, and the Human Torch going after him. In a great chase, Torch and Spidey went after the Fox, the good guys won, and a new chapter in comic reading had been opened...the Marvel annual...forever thereafter to feature original material.

Also, in that year came the first Fantastic Four Annual. It is worthy to note that on the cover of the comics in those days, they advertised "72 big pages", and that is what they had inside. 72 Marvel pages, without one advertisement for anything non-Marvel. In the 1st Fantastic Four Annual were crammed a 37-page original story, 11 pages featuring FF foes, two pages on the FF, a cutaway view of the Baxter Building, an expanded version of the FF-Spidey battle from Spider-man #1, a reprint of the Origin of The Fantastic Four from FF#1, and, ads for Strange Tales Annual no.2, and Spider-man, and the Avengers, a total of 72 pages, only 13 being reprint. Quite a package for 25¢!

So the theme was set for Marvel annuals...original material. Next year, in 1964, there were again two 72-page annuals, but this year they were a different two. There was the first Spider-man Annual, including "Stan and Steve (Ditko) create Spider-man", the first of the bullpen spoofs, & special features, and the second FF Annual. Before then, Doctor Doom had been presented as a formidable villain, and little else, but this issue, Doctor Doom was presented in his greatest glory. (See Wayne Warfield and his "Diabolical Lord of Latveria", part III, in Marvel Mirror #7 for any details you may want).

The Marvel annuals (and Marvel themselves by this time) then finally start-

ed the upswint to glory, getting the attention they deserved. The annuals had been so successful, in fact, that next year we were treated to four of them.

The first Sgt. Fury Annual was both a great success and a great failure. The story was good, but it showed the Howlers in the future, which became a theme for succeeding annuals. #1 showed them in Korea. Here, Eric Koenig was strangely missing, mainly because he had not then been added to the regular mag. No one had even heard of Eric Koenig at this time, which spoiled the annual later even more than originally. One thing Marvel has always bragged about is realism and this annual spoiled the realism of Sgt. Fury. Now we knew that all the Howlers would come thru the war okay. & it was bad enough to know that Nick would, Agent of Shield having been launched a month earlier, but now we knew they all would. Not only did it take some realism out of the mag, but it took suspence out of it too.

But this seemed to be the year f o r the reprint, for all mags featured reprint material--galore. Sgt. Fury's... for instance, featured reprints of "Lord Ha-Ha's Last Laugh", which included the one-and-only death of a Howler, Junior-Juniper. Perhaps they intended to make up for immortalizing the Howlers by reprinting this. They also printed "At The Mercy of Baron Strucker" (#5), again.

Another first that year was the Thor Annual. Like the rest of the 1965 annuals, it featured one original story, and almost all the rest reprint. Reprinted were four stories, (since the Thor stories were not then full-book), from #'s 85, 93, 95, and #97. There was added a two-page diagram of Asgard.

Next came the "Be-Kind-To-Stevie-Ditko" Spider-man Annual #2, wherein Spidey teamed with the other character, Ditko was drawing then, Doctor Strange. The story was of annual quality, and I think only Ditko could have handled it a n d, make it seem to be in Spider-man style. There were reprints, from #1, #2, and # 5, plus a few special features.

The third Fantastic Four Annual featured "The Wedding of Reed and Sue", -- guest-starring everyone but the Hulk & Subby. Reprints were from #6 and #11.

Thus we see that the Marvel annual began as 72 pages of uninterrupted entertainment, featuring practically all original material, special features, & a little reprint, but as years went by, the original material decreased and it

gave way to more reprint.

And the trend in reprint reached a peak in 1966. Except for the one original story, original material was dropped completely.

Sgt. Fury Annual #2 featured D-Day & two reprints. Thor Annual #2 consisted of "Who Dares Defy the Destroyer", and, two reprints. FF Annual, #4, featured: "The Torch that Was" and two reprints-- Spider-man Annual #3 consisted of :"T o Become an Avenger" and two reprints.

True, there were still 72 pages, as before, but most of them were reprints. Marveldom rose up in arms!! Marvel had had innumerable complaints--obviously-- about the lack of original material in the 1965 and 1966 annuals, and 1967 Marked a turning point... sort of. Marvel did something in answer to the gripes, of Marveldom assembled. First they cut the number of pages down. No more 72 pages of entertainment uninterrupted. & no reprints at all. Marvel Tales, and MCIC were handling the reprints, and, so Marvel had nothing but original material, in fewer pages.

The Sgt. Fury Special (yes, Stan had decided to call them Specials instead of Annuals) featured "Viet Nam: The Valor and the Victory!" The Thor Ann., had been dropped and was replaced by 2 others: the Avengers Special in which the Avengers (old and new) fought against a group organized by the Mandarin, & the Daredevil Special, featuring a yarn like Spider-man Annual #1's, except for the villain line-up. Maybe Electro got the idea from when he was in Doc Ock's-group? There were special features i n

Note: In case it is not obvious (I have the feeling it is), the pic to the right, and the one on our beautiful back cover are the only two fully pencilled by Johnny "Spider-man" Romita. The other two were laid-out by him, and pencil-led and inked by our own Ted White.

PENCILS - John Romita
INKS - Ted White

both, like an Avengers H.Q. plan and a billy club layout, but with long original stories and many special features, the number of actual comic pages was reduced considerably. The Spider-man Special #4, guest-starring the Torch, & the Fantastic Four Special #5 featuring all those supporting characters Marvel has had in FF over the years, were also shorter by many pages. All Specials were shorter, but had more original material.

And now the 1968 Specials have come, and gone. Sgt. Fury Special #4 had only one special feature, which seemed, grossly out of place, and the Spider-man Annual #5 had many idiotic, childish features like "Peter Parker.....Super-Sports Star". (The Spidey Special however, had the best Bullpen spoof yet!!) Otherwise, they were just extra - long stories, some of them too long, seeming stretched out to fit the annual...er... special format.

So where is the Marvel annual going? It is shrinking in size, losing its beloved Special features that kept us informed about deep probing questions... like the FF Q & A's page in Annual #1. Although the extra-long stories are okay, the same effect is reached in the regular continued stories. The Marvel annuals have been an unequaled mile - stone in comics--will they stay that way?

THE MARVEL ART HYPOCRISY - by Mike Howell

(Note from the Author: This article is being written on a subject, which tends to change frequently--the assignment of artists by Marvel to different strips. Because this is such a highly fluctuating area, I've delayed writing this as long as I could to get my comments as up-to-date as possible. This is being written on Christmas day, so I'm not responsible for any changes in the artistic line-up after this day. Thank you).

Five or six years ago, Marvel Comics Group was relatively unknown. It produced its magazines with a staff of one writer/editor, five artists, and two or three inkers. It boasted that it was a company run by the whims of the public. Today, Marvel is one of the giants of the comics industry. However, with few exceptions, it's living on its reputation. It now employs the same editor / writer, five writers, thirteen artists, twelve inkers, and a number of utility-men.

At the start of the "Marvel Age Of Comics", writer/editor Stan Lee promised we mealy-mouthed masses if we did not like how a feature was being handled, it would be changed. Great, huh? Well, when crass commercialism hit the bull-

pen, this philosophy disappeared, along with most mature Marvel mags, the exceptions being the works of Roy Thomas--who has begun to realize his potential, and of course, the oft-thwarted, James Steranko.

Granted, there were strips like A. of Shield and Captain America which improved right off, but they were the exception, and only remained at a high standard as long as there was one of the aforementioned people on it. Such leaders as Fantastic Four, Spider-man, Thor, and Sgt. Fury remained stagnant in a pool of mediocity, while such notables, as Daredevil, Iron Man, Hulk, and Sub-Mariner sanko to something between junior grade Teen Titans & Secret Storm!!! The Avengers became almost another X-men, but then both Roy Thomas and John Buscema rose to their full g r a n deur. The addition of inker George Klein did not hurt either. (If you're wondering why I didn't mention the X-men, it's because it's my belief that they're really put out by some Fly-by-nite company. Even at their lowest creative ebb, Marvel couldn't have inflicted the X-men onto the reading public!)

Why, now-offended reader, do you believe I made the preceeding observati - ons? The answer is obvious. I am sick of seeing low-quality, frankly nauseating art in my favorite comics group!! There has been much talk about Marvel's art and artists. I hope to bring it all out in this essay.

Have you ever noticed that Marvel, does print (tho somewhat infrequently) letters criticizing plot, story, a n d, characterization? But when was the last time you saw a letter of less than t he utmost praise for any artist on t he staff? Sadly, the last artist criticized was one of the best--Steve Ditko.

The artwork is roughly 75 - 90% of a comic's initial appeal, if not over-all, appeal. If you have the greatest writer-in the world writing your strip, it will, not do any good if the book is drawn by, someone whose work looks like he draws, with his toes.

Why does Marvel refuse to print anti-art letters? They certainly don't have the best artists in the world, in fact, some of them are just plain terrible i n my mind. Surely they must receive enuff suggestions as to the readers' preferance. They can't all be poison-pen notes that they cannot print because it would offend someone. Roy Thomas says it's because the anti-art letters are of the juvenile: "I hate this guy, h i s a r t stinks" vein, but it seems highly impossible that out of all of fandom there is not one articulate art critic! Construc -tive criticism is one of the n i c e r rights we have.

I know they delete a lot of letters, that speak out against some penciller--for example, in Hulk #105 there is a let -ter from my brother Rich. If you read it it would seem to be very nice, mildly amusing, but of no real value. However, I know that what was printed was just a n introduction to the real part of t h e letter, which criticized Marie Severin's pencilling and George Tuska's inks. Ever notice on the yellow car it says... "Your letter (or portions thereof) will be printed in _____ # _____." It's that "portions thereof" that leaves them the loophole.

One person who I don't think deserves the amount of exposure he's getting is Gene Colan. When he broke into Subby under the alias of Adam Austin, everybody-loved him. But then, who couldn't look good inked by Vince Colletta? Later, he did Iron Man and Daredevil, where my main gripe lies. Colan is perfect for Iron-Man, but who do we get? "Joltin' "John - ny Craig, who main attraction is h i s talent to make every panel he draws.... come out 2-D, and George Tuska. And if there is anybody in comics today, w h o deserves to be out of comics tommorrow, it's him. Yet, at one time, this person destroyed no less than four Marvel titles a month. Gene Colan replaced John Romita, one of Marvel's less publicized assets, so John could "finish off" Spidey Special #3 in which all he did were the layouts! Now Romita gets to only do

one comic, the Spider-man Spect. having been demoted to story-board man on his own strip. Romita must be the most frustrated artist around. He's capable of pencilling two books a month, and maybe inking one also, but he is not even allowed to draw his own measily book, by himself. In fact, he has not even done a Spidey Special (thanks to nespotism!)

Of course Marvel has great artists, like Kirby, Romita and Steranko, but the staff is bogged down with people....as Tuska, M. Severin, Trimpe, Sutton, and Craig. Is this the line-up you want in your favorite comics?

A point I'll mention in passing here is that Marvel seems to be remaining stagnant, art-wise. It's only good new find is John Verpoorten, who besides doing brilliant Brechh work is a letterer and nice-guy also. Barry Smith's X-men tryout looked like a poor Kirby/Stone, but I hear that in his Shield, he looks like Steranko...and indeed, swipes from him. I'll reserve judgement until I see his permanent style. In the meantime, DC has surged ahead with major coups. First they got Steve Ditko, whose new Creeper, which was cancelled, Steve told me, hit hard and fast. Having Steve busy on the Hawk & the Dove, they proceeded to lure Wally Wood away from Witzend, for pencilling & inking. They also hired Jerry Grandenetti for the Spectre and the "horror" books. When you add these to such pros as Neal Adams, Joe Kubert, Murphy Anderson, Gil Kane and Dick Giordano, the scales are ridiculously unbalanced. With the impending rise in comic prices, many fans will have to drop titles from their purchases. Obviously, the intelligent fans will swing to what offers them more for the money which is buying less and less.

In the Mainspring of my own Marvel Main #4, I've offered a plan to alliviate the problem, so as not to be rebundant, the plan consists as a ballot, much like the Alley Awards, where the fans

all vote for their choice of artists f o r each strip. I've also suggested: ways to get around the toddlers who will have mommy write "Jack Kirby" on some-such on 3 trillion postcards, but, I'll not mention them here.

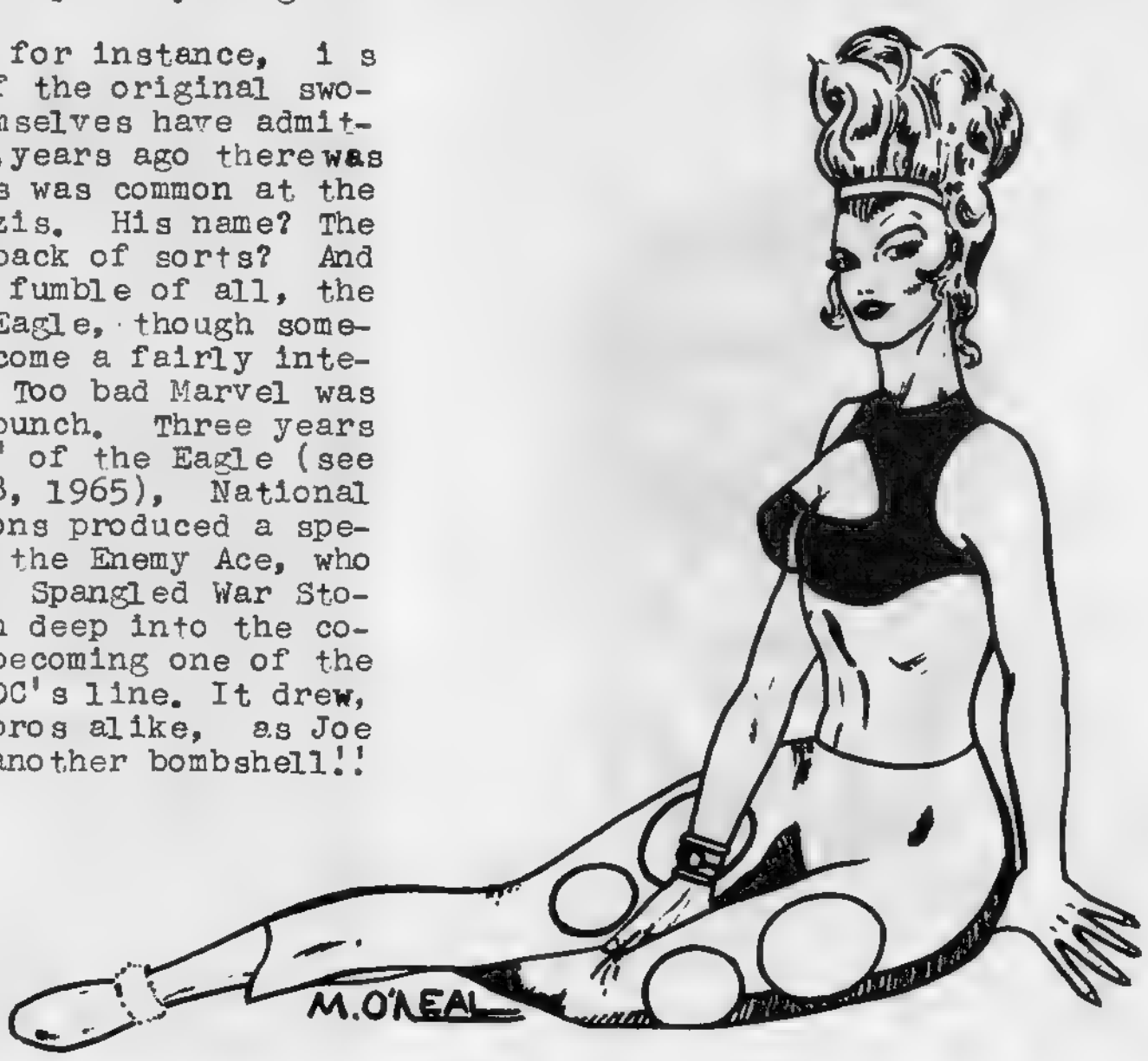
So while Marvel sticks in the quag-mire, National passes them. I'm sorry to say this could be the death-knell, or at least cause for policy revamping at MCG --should they continue to navigate their present course.

THE SECOND AGE OF MARVEL COMICS? by Pat Janson

At this time last year, Marvel w a s boasting an upcoming year of new characters, line-ups, more publications, and most important, a steep rise in quality. 1968 was, supposedly, to become the "Second Marvel Age Of Comics." Marvel was to dominate the comics world; they were to gain a reputation of being "the greatest comics company ever!" Mr. Lee did indeed present new characters, such as the Black Knight, Vision, Phantom Eagle and others, just to name a few. However, the validity of these new charac-ters actually being completely original can be questioned.

The Black Knight, for instance, i s the "reproduction" of the original swordswinger; Marvel themselves have admitted this fact. Also, years ago there was a character which, as was common at the time, battled the Nazis. His name? The Vision. Another comeback of sorts? And now, for the biggest fumble of all, the Phantom Eagle. The Eagle, though somewhat dull, could become a fairly interesting character. Too bad Marvel was again beaten to the punch. Three years before the "creation" of the Eagle (see Showcase #'s 57, & 58, 1965), National Periodical Publications produced a spectacular creation in the Enemy Ace, who now appears in Star Spangled War Stories. It has driven deep into the comics world, swiftly becoming one of the greatest sellers on DC's line. It drew, raves from fans and pros alike, as Joe Kubert came up with another bombshell!! You, who have not yet indulged in Enemy Ace may say, "But the Star Spangled... has been on the market for years....." which is true, and once was one of the worst magazines on the market. However it's the new contents that count. Believe me, it now highly out-classes the so-called "Phantom" Eagle. And as a certain female friend of ours once put it: "Why don't you pick one up and read one some time?" or something like that.

As for Marvel's line-ups (new).... who can keep up with them? The prime e-xample is Avengers. Every month you can pick up the mag and see in what was once considered the most stable comic, in Marvel, different characters coming and going. Just this year alone, more characters than are countable have appeared in it. Such are: Hawkeye, Thor, Capt. America, Goliath, Wasp, Iron Man and Black Panther, Black Knight, t h e Vision, Hercules, and undoubtably, many many more. The coloring has been ex-tremely dark (I might as well hit everything while I'm on the subject), and the art so crowded that it is difficult to look at, let alone read! T h e stories are fair, although sub-par for the usually excellent Roy Thomas, and,



they are still on the demise; there are so many sub-plots that it is beginni ng to seem like Peyton Place!! With a l l those characters, no wonder Buscema draws the mag in such a sticky way; he does a much better job on the Silver Su -rfer.

Say, how do you like Marvel's quality build-up? I know how I do, not much. About the only comics to increase in quality were Capt. America and the Fantastic Four; and I dare say Daredevil & Doc Strange. The Hulk and Sub-mariner have remained stable, and--I don't be - lieve it!! Something in Marvel was actually stable last year! Let's all give the Bullpen one big, hearty clap! (No cheating now, I said just one! Hmmmm.. that sounds familiar too!)

The comics that have decreased in quality are obvious, but for those Marvel worshippers, I shall proceed to name a few. The perfect example is--Spiderman! What's the murmering? Of course I mean good ol' Spidey, once one of t h e greatest characters in the annals of comics. Perhaps he is still such, under all that trash and bunk piled on him. The plots are still brilliant for the most part (although they are, quite often repeats), but the build-up aroun d them, the basic stories are suffering. As a matter of fact, they are slouchi ng so badly that Spider-man <u>is</u> beginning , to seem like Batman (as many critics, have said before).

The art is not what we have gro w n accustomed to, now that Johnny Romita is doing no more than the immediate layouts. Jim Mooney is a fine illustrator (as the credits put it), but he is just not Spidey--he's got no feeling for the script so to speak. If anybody should replace Mr. Romita as penciller, why not Larry Lieber? But, I must give credit to where credit is due: #70 was like the Spidey of old. With the exception of a sloppy coloring job on the cover, Stan& Mr. Mooney did a fine job.

As far as Iron Man goes, well, the scripts are still good, but, Gene Colan where are you?

And Capt. Marvel. He's switched artists so many times that he's beginning to look like the X-men--<u>all</u> of them...! The current story scheme is no longer, enjoyable, as Marvell has become little more than a zombie!

Speaking of the X-men, they've also changed artists too many times. Mr. Lee attributes frequent artist changes t o trying to discover a better illustrator to certain magazines, well, I think he found one long ago in Werner Roth. As far as I can see, he is the only one for the mag, and should stay as the regular on the feature, not the fill-in. Or why have a fill-in at all? The stories were much better when 20 pages long, instead of the 15 they now have.

Since Steranko has left Shield, it has suffered immensily art-wise. T h e stories still follow mod Jim's style... but the art just is not Shield--moder - nized Steranko. Again Stan's juggling hurt. However, he is not sole blame, as Jim grew tired of the mag. Yet, who is the editor & who does he need to please most--Mr. Steranko or the fans? Remember Stan, without us, there certainly, would be no Marvel, or any comics for that matter. I ' M sure that m o s t fans prefer Jim over Frank Springer, tho he too is a good man with the pencils.

Although this is extremely objective, it is definetly the only way to convey the truth: Marvel has failed, almost miserably in some cases, while others, have prospered. What are, who are the others? Try DC and Charlton as the most predominant. Charlton is making a tremendous comeback with far better stories, plots and art. The Question, Blue Beetle, and Hercules (although not quite as good as others) are among Charlton's best at present. Another is Capt. Atom, which, for the time being is "benched", so more work can be done on those which need improving. Thus far they are not

BY ROMITA and WHITE

up to Marvel's quality or standards, but then, what are Marvel's standards at present? Remember, Charlton is improving, and, with some support, may soon offer some real competition. Stan was quite niave when he stated that Marvel had no competition to speak of; how can anybody be so ignorant to such a fact as competition?

As for DC, what can be said? After naming a few titles, decide for yourself on the quality and originality of each. Such are: Creeper, Hawk and Dove, Secret Six, Bat Lash, Hammer of Hell (Enemy Ace), Spectre, the new Wonder Woman and many others. In my opinion DC's only bomb was the Geek, which now seems to have been discontinued. (And so have 3! of the titles you just mentioned Pat!--Ron.)

I used the word "quality" quite a bit, simply because it is the factor in comics. With the much more mature and intelligent readers of our "comic age", quality is manditory in a comic, as Stan himself admits. Therefore, after a close survey, avery close one, who actually had the better year? Was it DC?, Marvel, or even Charlton? I think it's safe to say that National was the leader in 1968 all the way, and Charlton,

made the largest improvements. The reason for Marvel's immediate demise is possibly the scrambled editorial policies of Mr. Lee. Stan claims that he has tried to get many pros, yet failed, as they went to another company. Could, this be the reason for the most part???? Stan claims he wants outside artists to develop Marvel's style, or Stan's. Does he ever think that many people would, like to stay with their own style? After all, these people have become pros with these particular styles, so they can't help but wonder what would happen to them should they change their ways! Oh, for you Lee worshippers, Mr. Lieber may very well be one of the greatest comic writers in the trade's thirty years but he's not quite the ideal editor, as his editorial qualifications leave a lot to be desired. However, he may yet improve, especially if he will just stop juggling his staff.

Let us look on the bright side....if there is one....; maybe, just maybe, 1969 will be the real advent of the "Second Age of Marvel Comics"; I wonder....

CAN THE CODE?

Written by ROY THOMAS and Ron Liberman

Not long ago, I wrote Marvel, asking them to "can the code". This letter was written in the hopes that the Gang would take some action to that effect, or to at least show a reaction. Marvel did. I received one of those blue "Many Thanks" cards, indicating that they had taken my letter into consideration; and then, to my delight, Roy Thomas took some valuable time out and wrote me a full explanatory letter. In this article, I shall print the letter in full, and also give, my views on the matter...

Daredevil #49 had pictured something that barely no other sixties' comics had --blood. I am sure you all noticed that panel in which Matt Murdock bled....so I won't go into describing it. I will say though, that it looked as if the colorer, had put the read there "accidentally". I am now almost sure, however, that this was no accident, and that Stan Lee had had this done purposely. If you'll notice carefully, what Roy Thomas is about to tell you, I am sure that you'll agree.

Anyhow, it was (& still is!) my opinion that the Code is too babyish for us older fans. What the heck aye, comics do not show blood, while a Quebec television commercial will be showing a girl.... in the NUDE! In comics, sex is taboo, & realism is non-existant. Doesn't a per-

son bleed when he is shot? From my stu-dies in health, I've learned that we've got a lot of this stuff called blood, & if wounded we bleed a lot! Marvel cannot possibly achieve semi-realism until they drop the Code, and start showing a little more of the facts of life. I do not want a walking blood&sex book, but I want a book that I can enjoy, read, and identify with. I can't very well identify with pure fiction.

I suggested to Marvel that they hold a poll, and find out from their readers exactly what is desired by comicdom... After all, Marvel has always claimed we are the ones who really run their organization--or so they say.

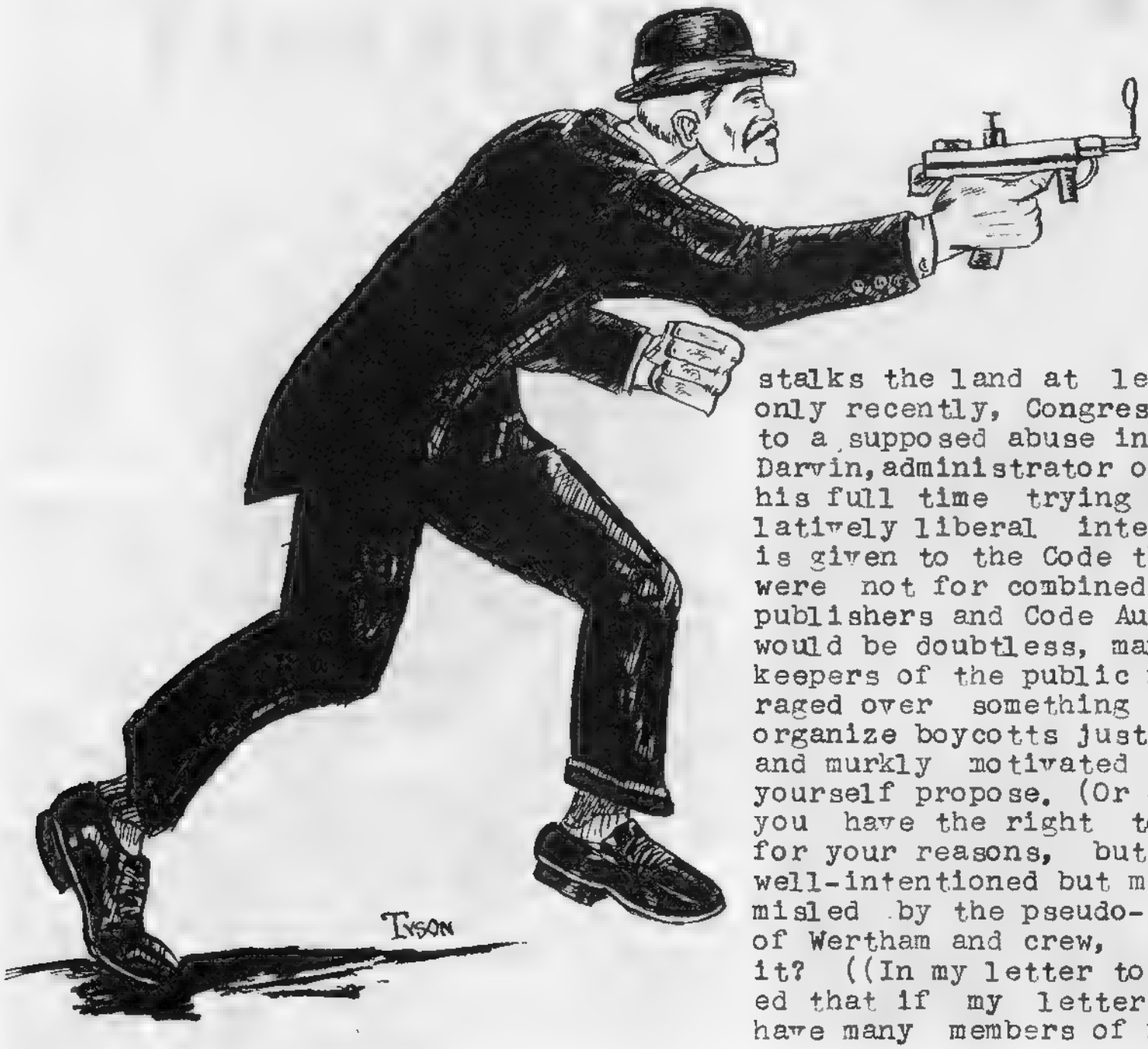
But I guess we must carefully evaluate Roy Thomas' words, and then decide amongst ourselves. --Ron Liberman

Dear Ron: Your letter disturbed Stan and me, so much so, in fact, that I'm t-aking more than the usual time and blue card to answer it. And it is, as you wish, being forwarded to our Mr. Martin Goodman, still our acting publisher.

However, you will no doubt be chagrined to learn that there is little or no chance that your suggestion (if such a strongly-worded request can be called that) will be adopted. As a member of organized fandom, you probably know the history of comic-books in the 1950's, a period which saw more comics on the newstands than ever before...and which also almost saw the end of the industry.

It is true that Marvel, DC, and most other companies would keep violence & sex, and other such things within reasonable limits. However, then other com-panies, whether well-intentioned or fly-by-night organizations, might come into the field which have no such scruples. Remember how even the relatively, mild Creepy led to the utterly tasteless Wierd and one issue of a thing named Tales From The Crypt?

And, while fandom would applaud such a move (at least in part), there are other forces to contend with in the world. Even after a decade and a half, the spectre of Wertham & his ilk, still



stalks the land at least sporadically; only recently, Congress was looking into a supposed abuse in comics, and Len Darvin, administrator of the Code, spends his full time trying to defend the relatively liberal interpretation which is given to the Code these days. If it were not for combined efforts of the publishers and Code Authority, there would be doubtless, many self-appointed keepers of the public morals, who enraged over something or other-- would organize boycotts just as undemocratic and murkly motivated as the one you yourself propose. (Or do you think that you have the right to boycott comics for your reasons, but that a group of well-intentioned but misguided mothers, misled by the pseudo-scientific garble of Wertham and crew, should be denied-it? ((In my letter to MCG, I mention-ed that if my letter was ignored, I'd have many members of fandom flood the

offices at 625 Madison Avenue; but this was said for the sole purpose of acquiring their attention. I am not sure if I would have carried out this threat--but as it turned out, I didn't need to!! Now back to Roy--Ron)).

There are, of course, many points on which you and we agree. I myself, when a fan publisher, spoke with disrespect of the Code...and I still feel that comics would and could, be of better quality without it. However, even then, I understood the reasons behind it, & that time was the only hope for healing old wounds--yes, more than the 15 years since the Code was founded. I based my thoughts then--and even more so since becoming a pro--on knowledge of past abuses, of the public proclivity for crusades (especially against industries ill-equipped to defend themselves with a powerful Congressional lobby), and of the tendancy for such documents to become somewhat liberalized as times and morals change. (Witness, for instance, the increased laxity of the movies' own code, which has gone far enough that it will doubtless cause a counter-reaction within the next few years). Comics too are now doing things they could not have done at the Code's inception--, but lacking the influence of the movie, and TV industries, we must soft-pedal such changes--and be constantly prepared to back-pedal, if need be.

In short, we are in sympathy with the realism you want to see in comics, and realize that many other readers feel as you do--with no need for us to hold any kind of affirming poll. We'll continue to do what we can to liberalize the Code from within, but we can't join you in a holy crusade against an association which our company helped create, and still supports. When the public attitude changes, we at Marvel will be only too happy to lead the way towards a greater (albeit not licentious) realism and the Code will wither away just as the Dictatorship of the Proletariat was supposed to. In the meantime, we hope

the NMA will find more constructive things to do (and more enjoyable ones--as well) than flood the mails on this subject.

We all have the same goals--the betterment of the comics industry-- so let us not be intolerant of the way that others try to reach the goal, huh?

Cordially, Roy Thomas, Assoc. Ed.

And there you have it. I suppose there is some doubt or puzzlement about Roy's letter, for he did not display the fact that the Code is a non-compulsory one! Practically any comic can come into the scene, with all the taboo it wants, and no one can do anything about it. His Name Is Savage did it, so can any other comic or similar-type magazine. Still, what Roy said had a lot of wisdom in it and I for one, am thinking more carefully about the Code,--its good points and its bad ones. I will let you weigh the situation, and make your own conclusion. Perhaps if Marvel can even liberal the Code more, semi-realism can be achieved? Who knows?...

M E M B E R S ' M A I L B O X

Dear Ron, Well, you've done it again--TMT #9 was as usual, a hit. I was overjoyed to see you've kept the title logo on the cover. The cover illo was good, but I prefer Ted White inking his own pencils or his inking Mike's pencils, as can be seen on pages five and thirteen. In my opinion O'Neal and White are one of the best pencil-inks teams in fandom and they're both great separately. And to complete our titanic two we have Don Sampson, who's no slouch! I've been try-ing to decide on the best pic this ish but it's impossible; it is a toss-up be-tween the O'Neal-White Iron Man, the O'Neal Ka-zar, the O'Neal-White Thor, & Sampson's Iron Man.

The fact that you no longer will be Prez of the club should not be too bad, as long as you remain on as Editor. I'm not sure whether to be happy or sad now that TMT will be published quarterly; sure it'll allow more time for articles and art etc., but it also means I'll only receive my favorite Marvelzine, four times a year instead of six. (sob!)

Next on the list is the marathon, length Lee interview. This answered-many of my questions such as which artists Stan would like to have work for Marvel, and, why their stories became continuous.

Dagenais' article on Kirby was good, but I feel nothing conclusive is ever stated in these articles. Usually, they are mostly opinions with just a few facts. Anyhow, art is mostly opinion, or personal preferences. I feel there is no "best" artist, but that it is a toss-up between Kirby, Wood, Steranko, Frazetta, Crandell, and Ditko etc.; each to his own.

Paul's article brought up a very good point; what ever happened to all those laughs and extras we were supposed to have received?? All I got was not one, but two copies of the Messenger. Yep, they goofed, and sent me two copies of the same zine, but that's all the extras that were sent to me.

The next article was just what fandom needs, another review of the Captain America novel--after all, there have only been about ten of them so far!

Charlie brought up a point which has been aroused in fandom lately. I would be happy if the Code was dropped from comics. Marvel seems to be on the way to doing this. For instance, in DD #49, page 14, panel one, blood is shown running down Matt's forehead. The only trouble which might result would be if

the artists got carried away, and started using too much violence, which I do not think will happen. Well, until next, issue, this is Joel Packer, signing off.

Joel Packer, 2177 E. 21 St., Brooklyn, N.Y. 11229

Dear Joel: I agree with you, O'Neal and White make a great team, no matter who does the inking and who does the pencil-ling. Sure I'd like to print bi-monthly, but right now that just isn't possible. Did you know that O'Neal's Ka-Zar drawing turned out poorly compared-to the original!? So if you liked that poorly-reproduced pic, you'd love Mike's original!

Dear Ron, I think it's rather foolish, of you to bill your zine as "Fandom's Best Marvelzine". In my mind you're only fourth best (and that high only because some of the better Marvelzines, like Spidey Fan etc., have been discon-tinued) behind YSG, Marvel Mirror, & Superzine. Your interview with Lee was a waste of time. Excelsior and several other zines have had enough interviews, with him that it's sheer boredom reading such things. I have no objection to interviews if they are with pros of some importance (I fail to see the value of an interview with minor artists such as Roth or Colletta, or minor writers such as most people who write for the Superman series) and if they are not with someone who's been overinterviewed like Lee has been.

I don't think that presenting any of

the stuff censored from Shield would warp the minds of anybody. Most of the little kids "Cheerful Charlie" refersto wouldn't understand it, and most people who were fairly mature would take it in an adult way, unless they already had a warped mind of some sort. The presentation of scenes dealing with sex i n anything hardly serves as an incitement to rape someone, unless he already has that desire in mind; violence on the TV or elsewhere doesn't serve as the basic cause of as many murders as does such more subtle things as greed, hatred, and revenge. I agree that some very sensitive child may be badly affected by the violence in comics, TV, etc., but that's the same sort of logic that would cause the banning of windows that could be opened, because many people commit suicide by jumping out of windows. Banning violence or sex in one medium will lead to it banning everywhere else, a l o ng with the loss of a great deal of mature writing which has to rely on these two things, until the only type of material that will be allowed to be printed in books or shown in films or on television will be such drivel as makes up most

NMA

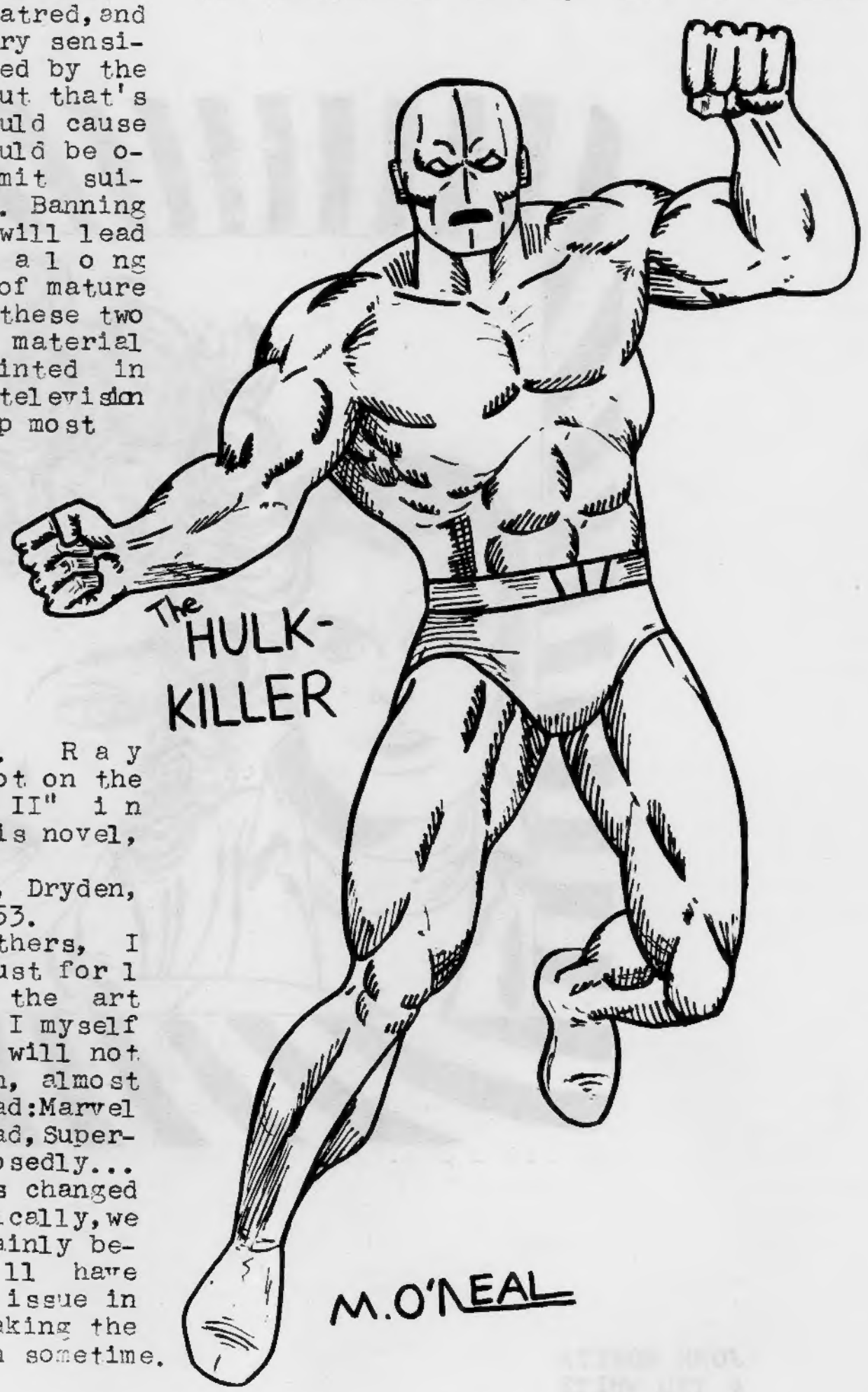
situation comedies on TV today. R a y Bradbury had written quite a lot on the subject, see especially "Usher II" i n The Martian Chronicles, and his novel, "Fahrenheit 451".

Charles Korbas, 379 Virgil Rd., Dryden, New York, 13053.

Dear Charles: As I've told others, I put that "FBMzine" up there just for 1 issue, mostly because I thought the art in the issue made it the best. I myself am against such billings, and I will not do this again. Remember though, almost all the Marvelzines are now dead: Marvel Mirror is reported dying or dead, Superzine is dying, the YSG is supposedly... dead, and E Pluribus Marvel has changed its name and its outlook; ironically, we are the best Marvelzine now, mainly because no others are left! You'll have read my views on the Code this issue in my two articles. Thanks for taking the time out to write, try it again sometime.

THE WRAP-UP - by Liberman

Okay group, there you have it. Hope ya dug this issue, and here's why: typing up this issue (including the layouting) took 20 HOURS of hard work by your editor. Yes that's right; each page takes ONE HOUR to do, so I hope you appreci - ate it. (This issue took most of a weekend to do!) About the Severin illo--promised in our ad in Rocket's Blast--I didn't have room, neither has it b e en inked yet, so I couldn't use it yet. #10 whoops...ll already! will be a blast!



THE MARVEL TRIBUNE

JOHN ROMITA
& TED WHITE